



**Frederick County  
Government  
Frederick, Maryland**

## *News Release*

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### **NBC'S *TODAY SHOW* FEATURES FREDERICK COUNTY TEXT TO 9-1-1 SERVICE FOR VERIZON WIRELESS CUSTOMERS**

FREDERICK, MD – NBC's *Today Show* came to Frederick County recently to film a story titled, "[Why Don't More 9-1-1 Centers Receive Emergency Texts?](#)" The show aired yesterday morning and highlighted aspects of Frederick County's new Text to 9-1-1 Service for Verizon Wireless customers. A link to the video of the story is available at [www.tinyurl.com/TodayShowText911Frederick](http://www.tinyurl.com/TodayShowText911Frederick).

"It could be any 9-1-1 call center in America, but this one is different because in Frederick County, Maryland, people who need help can text 9-1-1 dispatchers and they can text back," said *Today Show* Reporter Tom Costello.

During the show, Frederick County Emergency Management Director Jack Markey explained why those in need of help would send a 9-1-1 text: "It can be any number of reasons why they can't speak at the moment, it could be a medical event, a stroke, or something like that, but they can still type."

Mr. Costello continued, "Very few 9-1-1 centers are equipped to accept them. But, Frederick County is also the home of the Maryland School for the Deaf and the need seemed obvious.

"Especially when it comes to an emergency, time is so important and we didn't have that access ever, so this is huge," commented a representative from the school.

The *Today Show* filmed activity at the county's 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center, Maryland School for the Deaf and the Spring Ridge Fire/Rescue Station #33 during the segment as part of National Public Safety Telecommunications Week.

The Emergency Communications Center launched the Text to 9-1-1 Service in cooperation with TeleCommunication Systems, Inc., of Annapolis, Md., on March 21, 2013, for Verizon Wireless customers in the county who need to send a short message service (SMS) text message to "911" for emergency help when unable to make a 9-1-1 voice call.

(more)

Text to 9-1-1 is intended primarily for use in two emergency scenarios: for those individuals who are hearing impaired and for those unable to make a voice call, for example during a medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech, or in the instance of a home invasion or abduction where the sound of a voice call may increase risk to the caller.

Verizon Wireless customers should keep the following in mind when sending a text to 9-1-1:

- Customers should use the texting option only when calling 9-1-1 is not an option.
- Using a phone to call 9-1-1 is still the most efficient way to reach emergency help. Texting is not always instantaneous, which is critical during a life-threatening emergency. It may take slightly longer to dispatch emergency services in a text to 9-1-1 situation because of the time involved. Someone must enter the text, the message must go over the network and the 9-1-1 telecommunicator must read the text and then text back.
- Providing location information and nature of the emergency in the first text message is imperative, since the Emergency Communications Center will receive only an approximate location of the cell phone, and will not be able to speak with the person sending the text. Text abbreviations or slang should never be used so that the intent of the dialogue can be as clear as possible.
- Customers must be in range of cell towers in the Frederick County area. If customers are outside or near the edge of the county, the message may not reach the Emergency Communications Center.
- Texts sent to 9-1-1 have the same 160-character limit as other text messages.
- Verizon Wireless customers must have mobile phones capable of sending text messages and if so, should remove the usage control feature to ensure text to 9-1-1 capability.
- The solution is available for customers who use the SMS provided by Verizon Wireless. It is not available for third-party text messaging applications that can be downloaded to the phone or for applications that do not use SMS technology.
- The texting function should only be used for emergency situations that require an immediate response from police, fire or emergency medical services. Non-emergency issues should still be communicated to the Emergency Communications Center through its non-emergency line at **301-600-1603**.
- SMS 9-1-1 should only be to communicate between emergency help and the texter with no pictures, video, other attachments or other recipients appended to the message.

Frederick County Emergency Communications launched the Text to 9-1-1 pilot project with support from Verizon Wireless, TeleCommunication Systems, Inc., and the Maryland Emergency Number Systems Board.

For more information, visit [www.tinyurl.com/text911Frederick](http://www.tinyurl.com/text911Frederick) to read the press release that announced the launch of this new service or contact Mr. Markey at 301-600-6790 or via e-mail at [EM@FrederickCountyMD.gov](mailto:EM@FrederickCountyMD.gov).